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Pennsylvania Avenue - Scenic Byway

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Regional Setting

As shown on the regional map, the Pennsylvania Avenue Scenic Byway is accessible by vehicle from regional highways, parkways, and arterial roads. From the east, Pennsylvania Avenue is an exit off the Washington, DC Beltway (I-95/I-495) in Prince George's County, Maryland, where the Avenue is also identified as Maryland State Route 4. This route enters the District of Columbia and becomes the Pennsylvania Avenue corridor at Southern Avenue SE. From the west, access to the Avenue from Montgomery County, Maryland, is by way of MacArthur Boulevard or the Clara Barton Parkway, both of which connect to Canal Road. Canal Road, a District of Columbia Scenic Byway, joins M Street NW at Francis Scott Key Bridge in Georgetown. M Street intersects the western terminus of Pennsylvania Avenue at 29th Street NW.

The western end of the Pennsylvania Avenue corridor can also be reached from Arlington County, Virginia, by crossing Key Bridge from Rosslyn, at the eastern end of I-66. Rosslyn is also on the George Washington Memorial Parkway, which provides access to Washington National Airport. Other routes to the eastern part of the Pennsylvania Avenue corridor include the Southeast Freeway (I-395), which diverges from the Washington, DC, Beltway at I-95 and the Anacostia Freeway (I-295), which connects at both its north and south ends with I-95/I-495. These routes bring travelers to the Pennsylvania Avenue corridor in the vicinity of the Anacostia River

Corridor Description

Pennsylvania Avenue came into being as a primary artery in L'Enfant's 1791 Plan for the City of Washington. Today, this design is still evident, and the Avenue has become a major thoroughfare. It extends diagonally across the District of Columbia for about

7 miles from M Street in the city's Northwest quadrant, across the downtown district, to the Maryland State line in the city's Southeast quadrant.

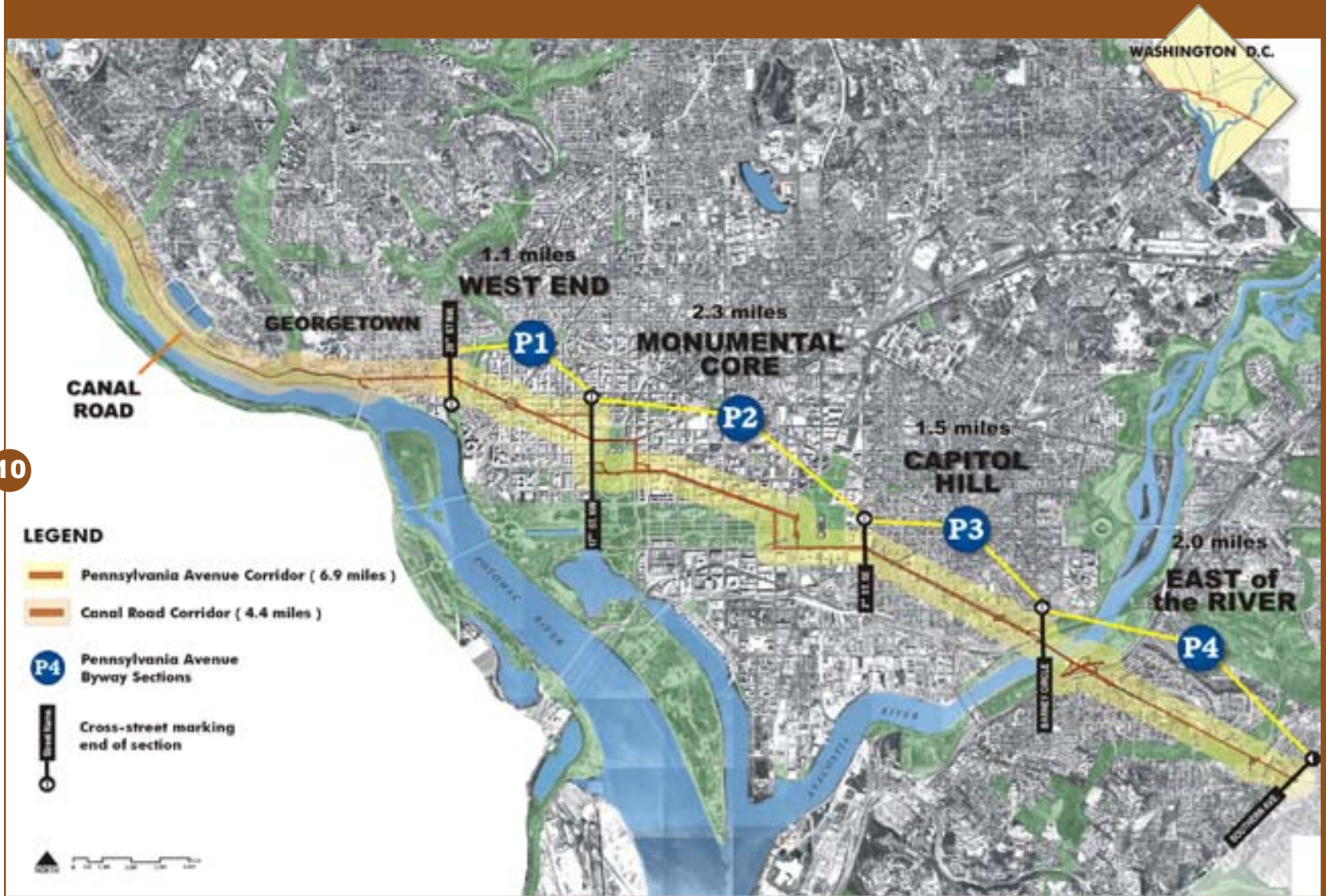
Within this relatively short distance, the Avenue connects a wide variety of District neighborhoods and areas: West End, Foggy Bottom, Lafayette Park, Penn Quarter, the National Mall, Federal Triangle, Capitol Hill, and the East-of-the-River neighborhoods of Randle Highlands, Hillcrest, Fairfax Village, and Penn-Branch. Along the Avenue, travelers experience geographic and cultural features that contribute significantly to the city's appearance. These include the hilly topography in the southeast, the broad floodplain and waters of the Anacostia River, and the gentle climb from the river to the Capitol building. The route then descends Capitol Hill to the monumental core and downtown and passes



REGIONAL
MAP

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Corridor Management Plan



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by the White House. From there, the Avenue continues through a distinctive, international and institutional corridor to Georgetown, a section of the city already well-established as a seaport when the Nation's Capital was moved here from Philadelphia in 1800.

The Pennsylvania Avenue corridor is defined in this document as the area that is visible from the Avenue, as well as nearby areas that are linked visually or physically to the corridor by side streets. Generally, the study boundary for this plan has been limited to two blocks on either side of the corridor. Exceptions are made for significant resources that significantly contribute to the character of the corridor, such as the Anacostia River and the National Mall. Because there are some alternative routes and loops within the corridor, the byway is more of a zone of roadways and urban

Description of Segments

Pennsylvania Avenue extends through some extraordinary sections of Washington, DC, rich in historic and cultural resources, as well as unique natural and recreational amenities. For planning purposes, the corridor can be divided into four segments, as described below.

West End

The West End segment extends 1.1 miles from 29th Street NW, where M Street in Georgetown merges with Pennsylvania Avenue, to 17th Street NW. High-rise office and institutional uses - such as George Washington University, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund - define the Avenue's character in this segment. There are also pockets of lower-scale, historic structures and a number of formal parks. Here Pennsylvania Avenue is a six-lane, 80-foot-wide roadway with a median strip.

Monumental Core

Monuments, government buildings, and high-rise offices characterize the Avenue from 17th Street NW to 2nd Street SE.

The 2.3-mile Monumental Core segment of Pennsylvania Avenue includes the White House and President's Park, Federal Triangle, and the US Capitol Grounds. The grand Inaugural Route between the Capitol and White House and six-lane segments west of the White House through business and commercial areas are characterized by office buildings and heavy taxi and delivery vehicle traffic.

This segment is one of the main tourist destinations in Washington, DC, attracting significant vehicular and pedestrian traffic. This segment is also fragmented by vehicular restrictions around the White House and one-way traffic restrictions near the Capitol. In order to maintain continuity, the byway route allows for other streets that connect with Pennsylvania Avenue. In some places, these alternative routes form loops around major attractions.

Capitol Hill

East of the US Capitol Grounds, between 2nd Street SE and Barney Circle next to the Anacostia River, this 1.5-mile segment of Pennsylvania Avenue is part of the well-known residential and commercial neighborhood of Capitol Hill. This portion of the Avenue is a wide eight-lane boulevard (including parking lanes) with a landscaped median. Rowhouses, a mix of uses, and the wide, tree-planted median are characteristic of this segment.

East of the River

Extending 2 miles farther east beyond Barney Circle, across the Anacostia River to the DC-Maryland border, this segment is predominantly residential and low-scale commercial in character. Reduced to a four-lane roadway here, the tree-lined Avenue maintains a straight horizontal alignment while rising and falling with the hilly topography. Beyond the intersection of Southern Avenue, Pennsylvania Avenue presents an almost rural-like setting as it continues into Prince George's County, Maryland. changing accordingly.



West End



Monumental Core



Capitol Hill



East of the River

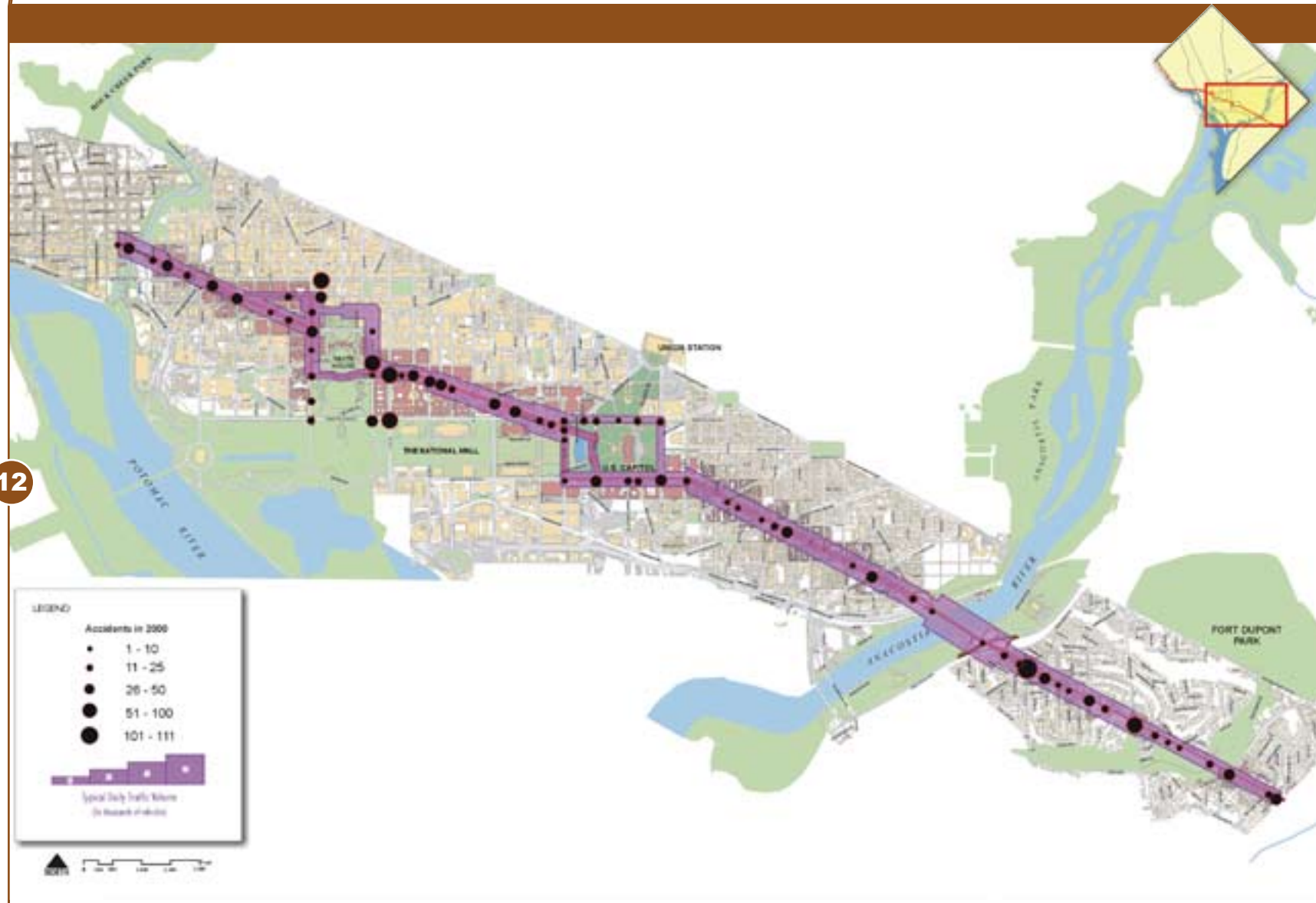


Fig. 2-2

TRAFFIC VOLUMES AND ACCIDENTS

THE BYWAY AND ITS CONTEXT

Roadway Characteristics

General Design & Maintenance

Functionally, Pennsylvania Avenue operates as a major commuter and gateway route and as an access roadway for destinations within the District of Columbia. In serving multiple functions, Pennsylvania Avenue has been designed, constructed, and maintained as a major multi-lane thoroughfare. The roadway ranges in width from four to eight lanes, with outside lanes serving as parking lanes in numerous locations. In areas east of Minnesota Avenue, for example, the roadway is a tree-lined, four-lane thoroughfare through a predominantly residential area. The portion of the Avenue through Capitol Hill is a wide eight-lane boulevard (including parking lanes) with a landscaped median. Downtown portions of the Avenue include the Inaugural Route between the Capitol and White House and six-lane segments west of the White House.

Speeds limits, where posted, are set at 30 miles per hour, although actual travel and maximum speeds vary according to traffic conditions. The Avenue, as an urban roadway, includes curbs, gutters, buried utilities, traffic signalization, and stormwater facilities, as well as street lighting along its entire length.

The horizontal alignment of Pennsylvania Avenue is nearly completely straight within the District. Only at Washington Circle in the West End, around the White House, and around the Capitol are drivers required to deviate from the straight alignment. The Avenue's relatively level vertical alignment west of the Anacostia River varies east of the Anacostia River. However, none of these grades present impediments to travel.

Present roadway surface conditions range from good to poor over the length of the Avenue. Poor roadway surface sections are presently found in portions of the parking lanes east of the Capitol and between M Street and 17th Street NW, where numerous cuts

made for installation of fiber optic and other communication cables have not been properly patched. Steel plates in the roadway are also encountered during periods of construction or repair of underground utilities. Roadway surface conditions over a long period of time will vary at any particular location as repairs, utility cuts, and patches are made and as periodic resurfacing occurs.

The District Department of Transportation maintains Pennsylvania Avenue. Maintenance includes street sweeping, repairs, resurfacing, lane stripping, bridge repairs, curb and gutter maintenance, snow removal, and maintenance of storm drains. Maintenance of lighting and traffic signals is carried out through contractors; street trees on District streets are also maintained under contract. Various utility companies perform periodic maintenance or construction activities along the Avenue. The National Park Service maintains intersecting Park Service roadways connecting Park Service property, such as the National Mall and Stanton Park, with Pennsylvania Avenue. The Architect of the Capitol is responsible for the roads around the US Capitol Complex.

Traffic Volumes

Traffic volumes along Pennsylvania Avenue are typical of major urban arteries in the District of Columbia. Traffic volumes (prior to traffic restrictions and road closures instituted after September 11, 2001) west of the White House ranged from 15,000 Average Annual Weekday Vehicles (vehicles per day in both directions, or VPD) to 34,000 VPD. Along the Avenue between the White House and Capitol, volumes were typically 25,000 to 40,000 VPD, although the short portion of the Avenue that runs concurrent with Constitution Avenue between 3rd and 4th Street NW carried volumes of 60,000 VPD. On Capitol Hill, Pennsylvania Avenue carried 31,000 VPD.



Approaching Minnesota Avenue, SE



Wide landscaped median in the Capitol Hill segment